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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the character of the teaching communities that have emerged in Michigan's charter and professional-development schools (PDS). It focuses on rhetorical constructions of what a teaching community is and how it is understood by those who are a part of it, with the assumption that teachers are subject to the cultural perceptions of the organizations in which they function. Three questions guided the investigation: (1) How can different teaching communities be characterized, either formally or informally? (2) How does the formally constructed work environment influence or impact the nature of a teaching community? and (3) In what ways do approaches to building a teaching community differ between charter and PDS? An examination of the various teaching communities in Michigan public schools reveals important insights about the nature of schools as institutions as well as efforts to reform them. Therefore, the researchers' goal was to develop a framework for investigating teaching communities and to illuminate the impact the two reform strategies (charter and PDS schools) may have on teachers' work. The work was drawn on teacher qualitative data including administrator and focus group interviews, classroom observations of whole school events, as well as text and artifacts collected over a three year period. A total of eight urban elementary charter and professional development schools in Michigan were studied. The purpose of the study is to show that there is just as much variation within as well as between the teaching community. The findings conclude that while the researchers expected to see similarities and contrast between PDS and charter schools, a pattern was not found. Suggestions for developing and sustaining a framework for investigating charters and PDSs, opportunities for staff development, faculty stability and hiring procedures, supervision and leadership, and faculty commitment to a vision/design are all explored. Future uses of this framework are outlined. (Contains 27 references.) (AA)

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Teacher Community in Charter and Professional Development Schools

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Introduction

Recent demands for schools that favor ambitious teaching and learning place teachers at the center of reform efforts (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 1997; Haselkorn, 1998). As a result, the ways that teachers work, and the nature of teaching communities have become a focus for policymakers across the country. Through organizational initiatives such as shared decision-making and curricular teaming, recent reform initiatives have emphasized the importance of "community" and collegial work. Still, despite widespread support for effective teaching communities, there is much we don't understand about how they develop and what sustains them over time (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). In order to begin thinking about how ambitious teaching and learning can be fostered in American public schools, it is important for us to explore the varied contexts in which teachers work.

This paper aims to describe and explain the character of the teaching communities that have emerged in Michigan charter and professional development schools. Charter and professional development schools both, while operating simultaneously, have been implemented in separate contexts. While the reforms are distinctly different both in theory and operation, they are both at their core centered around notions of community. Charter and professional development school reforms attempt to explicitly address the contexts in which teachers work, through a manipulation of school community. The rhetoric of the charter school movement has, to date, focused on the development of communities of parents and students, while the rhetoric surrounding professional development schools has focused almost exclusively on the development of professional community among teachers. In both instances, however, rhetorical constructions of what a teaching community is, and how it is understood by those who are a part

of it have been left largely unexamined. Are significant differences likely? If so, what do those differences look like, and what accounts for the variance?

In an attempt to answer these questions we have developed a conceptual framework to investigate different types of teaching communities. Our work is guided by the assumption that teachers, as participants in institutions, are subject to cultural perceptions of the organizations in which they function. Consequently teacher behavior in schools exemplifies how "organizations are cultural systems embedded in a wider culture" (March & Olsen, 1983, 289-90). We were guided by three questions in developing this frame: 1) How can different teaching communities be characterized, either formally or informally; 2) How does the formally constructed work environment influence or impact the nature of a teaching community; and 3) In what ways do approaches to building teaching community differ between charter and professional development schools?

An examination of the various teaching communities in Michigan public schools reveals important insights about the nature of schools as institutions, as well as efforts to reform them. We believe that teacher community remains an underconceptualized construct. Therefore our goal in developing a working framework for investigating teaching communities is to illuminate the range of possibilities for collegiality within these two reform strategies and the resulting impact they may have on teachers' work. While it is tempting to contrast charter and professional development schools, pitting "reformed communities" against one another, this is not our intention. Rather, our exploration of teaching community in these two schools is open to the possibility that there is just as much variation within as between teaching communities in the two different kinds of schools. Our work draws on qualitative data, including interviews and

classroom observations collected over a three-year period from eight urban elementary charter and professional development schools in Michigan.

Professional Development and Charter School Teaching Communities

Over the past decade, Michigan has seen the rise of multiple educational reform innovations. The search for "new visions" of American public schooling has created fertile ground for the growth of both professional development and charter schools. What implications has this rapid growth of both charters and PDSs had on the nature of teacher community in either sites? Both reform strategies clearly place a premium on student learning, however we would expect teaching communities to emerge somewhat differently within each reform movement.

PDS Community. Professional development schools are specially designed to support the professional work and learning of the teachers in them. Darling-Hammond (1988, 1989, 1995) as well as Firestone and Bader (1992) have clearly articulated the general character of what they believe professional work means for both schools and teachers. Teachers are placed in the role of "skilled professional[s] with a responsibility to apply specialized knowledge to the unique circumstances of each learner" (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988 10). The prerequisite conditions for professional community, as described by the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Forum (1986) are that: teachers have discretion, autonomy and opportunities for leadership, districts foster collegial styles of decision-making and teaching, teachers are provided with support to encourage effectiveness and productivity, and districts consider a wide variety of approaches to school district leadership. The ideal that teachers are responsible for the welfare of children, and their specialized education and experience gives them the authority to determine whether or not children are being adequately educated (Firestone & Bader, 1992) means that "teachers have a professional responsibility to maintain an environment and processes that

contribute to the learning and development of their students . . . There is also the closely related expectation that they be competent in fulfilling many other responsibilities in their professional role" (Wagner, 1989 p.131). Thus, in the teaching community of a PDS we would expect to see particular importance assigned to issues having to do with the manner in which teachers are supported as learners, with the development of structures to support teacher learning, with norms of collegiality and conceptions of joint/cooperative work, and with conceptions of teaching as a profession.

Charter School Community. In the teaching community of a charter school, however, we might assume particular importance assigned to issues of articulation and adherence to a particular mission, including criteria for the recruitment and retention of staff and the development of mechanisms to encourage the participation and "voice" of parents. Charter schools, as one type of school choice reform, propose to change school structures and as a result the working environment for teachers. Relying on the understanding that bureaucracy is the foremost obstacle to school success, charter school reformers focus solely on challenging the traditional bureaucracy rather than the organizational participants. (Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996) Advocates of choice and charters maintain that by removing government from the picture, and letting the forces of competition take over, schools will improve. Chubb and Moe state this most explicitly when they write that autonomy is "the most important prerequisite for the emergence of effective school characteristics"(Chubb & Moe, 1990, 23). There are many theoretical assumptions about the value of a school of choice system as well as the market metaphor applied to education: schools need to accommodate parent and student preferences, effective school reform necessitates the breakdown of current bureaucratic structures, choice

systems will encourage competition and improvement in schools, there will be incentives for teacher innovations, and market forces are an efficient means of achieving goals.

Summary. In many ways professional development schools were expected to yield a uniform set of norms and expectations for teaching communities in each school. The circumstances of each school, and the conditions under which the teachers were expected to operate would be different, as would the relationships that teachers would forge with students and their parents. However, the PDS model operated under the assumption that all teachers would work together, as one professional community, toward a vision of teachers and students learning together. In marked contrast, charter school reform was expected to allow for, and even encourage diversity. Charter schools were expected to vary a great deal in their mission, goals, and student populations, and that decentralization and site-based governance should produce numerous iterations of a responsive teaching community, none of which could be privileged over another since "difference" was the goal.

Our work attempts to ferret out how teacher community might differ within these sometimes-competing reform efforts – a particularly complicated task. A review of the professional literature yields only a handful of accounts for how teaching communities emerge in public school contexts (e.g. Newmann, 1996; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994; Westheimer, 1998; Sykes, Wheeler, Wilcox & Scott, 1996). Not surprisingly, much of what we *think* we know about how teachers work together stems from personal observation and hearsay. This lack of naturalistic examples for how schools have negotiated the murky waters of collegial work leaves us little ground on which to stake claims about teaching community generally, let alone within charter or professional development school reform. Further, teaching community is not a single,

unified concept. For each school and organizational context there will be different factors that contribute to the development of a teaching community.

What are Teaching Communities?

Despite popularity with scholars and policymakers, definitions of teacher community are often unclear. Over time, terms such as professional community and teaching community have been used interchangeably to describe the joint work of teachers that is not only practice-based and inquiry-driven, but also steeped in reflective dialogue (Little, 1987, 1990). Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) define professional community as "teachers' collective engagement in sustained efforts to improve practice" (p. 758), and others stress the professional nature of collaborative work (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). Still, what many scholars fail to address with respect to defining teaching community are questions of who belongs and what sustains such communities over time. Given a lack of consensus over what teaching communities are, and ambiguities in those definitions that do exist, it seems natural that teaching communities and the nature of their work remain a mystery. As Plank (1996) reminds us,

> Community is a universally popular term for educational policy because it encompasses many different meanings; all can agree that closer ties to the community are a good thing, as long as the term remains undefined. This apparent consensus quickly breaks down, however, in the face of inevitable disagreements about the character and size of the relevant community in particular contexts (p. 13).

Professional development and charter school reform efforts both assume a specific and agreed upon meaning attached to community, while in practice this understanding may not exist among educators and those associated with a school. While ambiguous definitions have obvious advantages in a policy arena, it certainly makes the route toward reform at the school level more difficult. As one might expect, the process of building community often has more to do with "figuring it out as you go along" than constructing thoughtful, proactive measures. A lack of

definition also allows for equally valid, multiple, and occasionally competitive interpretations because there is no shared understanding for what teaching community means.

Who Belongs? Developing a portrait of any teaching community requires that we identify or characterize its membership. Questions about who belongs to any teaching community raise issues of both who is eligible for membership as well as how one gains entrance into the community. For example, Westheimer (1998) asks: Is community a "chance gathering of gifted individuals around an important issue" or the "deliberate creation of organizational conditions that encourage communal ties" (p. 2)? It is unclear which is a more appropriate interpretation of membership. The question of "who belongs" demands examination both so that teachers are aware of what is expected of them within a community, and are able to fully participate in a collegial environment.

Teachers generally lack a common understanding for what membership in a teaching community entails. Membership cards aren't issued, nor do teachers receive a list of expectations for collegial work when they begin their first teaching assignment. Further, there are few meaningful sanctions for acting in an "non-collegial" manner. Additionally, the culture of teaching in the United States is such that autonomy remains favored over collaborative work (Little, 1990). While the tide may be shifting, the modal practice continues to lean in the direction of autonomous craft-like practice. There is evidence suggesting that even without official organizational divisions (i.e. departments or grade levels) teachers tend to naturally group themselves around similar interests or political affiliations (i.e. "coaches" and "new teachers") that don't necessarily align with notions of meaningful and substantive collegial work (Hargreaves & Macmillan, 1995). How schools, organizationally, identify community members,

as well as how teachers themselves understand their role within a school can powerfully influence the nature of a teaching community, and the work that ensues.

Newmann (1996) has suggested a framework that supports an image of whole school community, arguing that when all teachers coalesce around a shared set of norms and expectations for what school is about, students benefit. Huberman (1993) takes a less eager – albeit hopeful – stance when he suggests that teachers be allowed to organize themselves as they see fit, in and outside of school, around mutual interests. He rests his argument on the claim that group work doesn't have to involve everybody equally, suggesting that teachers, as "independent artisans", to allowed to "graft such deliberate work on the ways in which [they] spontaneously construe their work and relate to their peers" (p. 45). The establishment of a set of group norms for community work within a school both identifies who belongs to a teaching community, as well as the manner in which the community is maintained.

What Sustains a Community? Understanding a teaching community also requires a look at how individual communities are nourished and sustained. But examining how teaching communities develop and are maintained over time is a difficult endeavor. Recent scholarship suggests that teacher community reflects both a process and a set of features that are mutually reinforcing. Westheimer (1998) noted that community "both shapes and is shaped by interaction and participation. If the outcome is a process (and community may well be an ongoing process), then what we have been calling the 'features' of community may themselves be both 'features of' and 'processes to' community" (p. 19). Thus, teaching community is a dynamic and interactive process that is more circular than linear in nature.

This leads one to ask, are there factors, outside of structural conditions, that motivate the work of teacher communities? Further, if such factors exist, are they more powerful than

structural conditions? For example, when teachers are involved in an activity they consider empowering, they may then be compelled to transform the structural features of the school, thereby enhancing the work of the teaching community. In this case teacher empowerment creates conditions necessary for professional advocacy. Therefore, it could be that engaging and substantive work around central issues of practice can stimulate the development of organizational structures in support of community. This then leaves us asking: Is teaching community a reform strategy, a by-product of reform, or somehow both at the same time?

The Need for a Framework

As we searched for answers to these questions of "who belongs" and "what sustains the work," we found one additional question in the process. What conditions and/or features enable this joint work? We knew charter schools differed from professional development schools in some rather significant ways. For example, many charters feature at-will contracts without the protection of the union. They typically have smaller student enrollments and a less diverse teaching staff than long-established schools, and perhaps most importantly, they operate in relative autonomy. In contrast, professional development schools are not only responsible to a larger institution, the school district, but they also must cooperate with outside sources, namely the university. Still, the PDS teachers in our sample were well-seasoned classroom veterans who seemed to enjoy the security and engagement offered by the "well-oiled" machinery of the traditional public schools. This led us to questions about what role union membership might play in the development of teacher communities, and what constraints multiple layers of bureaucracy might have on the nature of joint work. Additionally, we wondered how commitment to a specialized mission might interact with other factors in bringing about shared visions for collaborative work.

A review of the literature provided us with some important insights. Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) suggest that professional communities are dependent upon both structural features and human or social resources (see also Newmann, 1996). In a national study of twenty-four restructuring schools they found staff complexity, teacher empowerment and scheduled planning time to be key structural conditions necessary for the formation of professional community. Additionally, they found supportive leadership, openness to innovation and change, respect by colleagues, parents and the administration, and staff development opportunities to be important as well to the development of community. This last set of conditions they coined human and social resources.

Sykes, Wheeler, Wilcox and Scott (1996) present a similar set of "threshold conditions" for the formation of community that help determine the pace and degree of change possible. These include cooperation, authority, organization and leadership, resources and commitment. At stakes are issues of participation (Is participation voluntary or mandatory and how stable and continuous is participation over time?), power (Who makes decisions, secures resources and enacts change?), and teacher efficacy (To what degree are teachers able to influence decisions that impact their classroom practice?).

Finally, Westheimer (1998) identifies a set of nine features and three processes that contribute to the formation of teacher community. The features he identifies, each of which are presented on a continuum from liberal to collective practice, include the degree to which teachers engage in joint work, the nature of teacher discourse and the ways in which dissenting opinions are handled. Equally important, the three contributing processes (which incidentally also describe the community) center around hiring processes, expectations surrounding faculty participation and the nature of curricular goals for students and teachers.

Each of these models share an understanding of teacher community as emerging from 1) a set of organizational conditions leading to community, and 2) a set of defining characteristics or commitments that grow from community. The resulting relationship between conditions and commitments is both dynamic and interactive. However, these various models don't help describe and explain the differences we found between teacher communities in charter and professional development schools. Believing that the multiple factors and circumstances which contribute to the development of a school faculty do not necessarily constitute a single "good" or "bad" manifestation of what we call a teaching community, we sought to identify this range of responses in our data that yielded differing organizational structures, beliefs and cultures. Joel Westheimer in *Among Schoolteachers: Community, Autonomy and Ideology in Teachers' Work* (1998) reminds us that,

> Calls for a strong sense of community among teachers and students are ubiquitous, and few disagree with such a goal. But what these teacher communities would look like and how to move toward them are questions too often left to the imagination and frustration of those who work in schools (p. 5).

Given that teaching communities mean different things for different school actors, and look different from school to school, we found it necessary to develop a framework that identified the common, salient features of a teaching community generally, so that we could adequately describe individual teaching communities specifically. Our attempt, through the development of a framework for examining teaching communities, is to characterize and define teaching communities that emerge in schools by identifying the wide range of structural, organizational and/or human conditions and commitments that support their formation and maintenance.

Method for Developing the Framework

In addition to scholarly literature, we have drawn on data collected as part of an OERI funded field research initiative investigating charter and professional development schools to build a conceptual framework for investigating the nature of teaching communities. The eight schools in this study are similar to the end that they are all urban and serve populations that could be considered "at-risk". Our sample included five charter schools: Henry Adams Public School Academy, Lake Superior Public School Academy, Marcus Garvey Public School Academy, and Thoreau Public School Academy, and three professional development schools, Southside Elementary in the Elmwood District, Frank Lloyd Wright Elementary in the Belton District, and Cooper Elementary in the Monte Carlo District. In Michigan, charter schools are referred to as public school academies, and according to court rulings are in fact public schools that can (and do) receive public funds. All of the PDS in the study have or have had an association with a university in the state of Michigan that was determined independently of any kind of choice mechanisms currently in place throughout the state. In Michigan, both PDS and CS are classified as public schools, meaning that they are receive public funds, and are subject to the same laws and legislation as any other public school in the state. Thus, both reforms operate within the framework of Michigan Public Schools.

Data collected from the schools includes teacher interviews and observations, teacher focus group interviews, observations of whole school events and administrator interviews, as well as texts and artifacts collected over a three-year period. Through preliminary analysis of the data we have been able to identify salient features of teaching communities that are common to all of the schools in our sample.

Interviews conducted with school principals were helpful in our analysis in that they "set" the context for each site. They described the school's mission at length and it's distinctiveness as a charter or PDS. They also described the formal learning opportunities, as well as the time for planning and joint work that was offered to teachers. In addition, they highlighted the interplay -- as perceived by the principal -- between teachers, students, parents, and administrators around the articulated mission of the school.

Of particular interest to us in the teacher interviews were prompts which asked participants to identify influences on their practice as teachers of mathematics and literacy, as well as particular experiences that have shaped their teaching and the degree to which their teaching has changed over time. Although the extent to which participants elaborated on these questions varied among those in our sample, we have some very rich accounts of teachers working together around shared concerns of teaching and learning.

Also useful were the focus group interviews where participating teachers were asked to describe their sense of community in the school. Questions asked included: Who would you say "belongs" to the school's community in terms of their active participation in the life of the school? How many teachers regularly participate in school-wide activities? Who provides leadership in defining and implementing the school's mission? How would you characterize the principal's role and leadership style? To what extent have others (teachers, parents) assumed leadership roles in the school? Who is involved in school governance? Who has real influence in the school? How is conflict managed within the school?

In developing the framework we read through the data set, case by case, multiple times. Each pass through we attempted to tease out the various confounding factors that pointed to either the presence, or in some cases the absence, of teacher community. What we found

sometimes supported our hunches, and at other times completely surprised us. While we assumed that over time we would start to see similarities and contrasts between PDS and charters, we did not find this to be the case. For example, we have charters where the absence of a union has contributed to staff instability, and charters where the absence of a protective body seems to have made no difference at all. Similarly we have examples of a professional development school where teachers report the union has contained the efforts of some teachers in the building to contract hours, while in another PDS site the union was never mentioned at all.

This range of responses characterized a host of issues, among them concerns of local governance, staff accountability and commitment to a vision. Consider the following example, taken from field notes collected during an interview with a teacher in one of our schools:

> Betty generates many of her ideas from working closely with the other second grade teacher (also a teacher in this study). They regularly plan together and bring information to each other. Next year there will be three 2nd grade teachers. Betty felt that this was "really neat at this school because the teachers don't hoard their ideas, but share them". She has "seen other schools where the teachers almost seem to compete against each other" but not so here. (Thompson, Interview#2, 5/12/98)

At first glance, one might think that Betty is a teacher in a professional development school, since commentary such as this is what one would expect to hear about a PDS teacher. In actuality, Betty teaches in a charter school. What accounts for this? If professional development and charter schools were expected to diverge in their approaches to collegiality, how is it that we find such striking similarities? One clue lies in the leadership of Betty's building administrator. Again, from field notes we find the following:

> [Betty's] principal reports that school culture starts with the staff. He says there is a lot of teamwork, and that the staff has a common educational vision for the students at the school. The principal said that one of the first activities that he worked with the staff on was everyone's strengths and weaknesses to build a team. (Oppenheimer, Interview#1, 3/5/97)

Even though the school in which Betty teaches is a charter, we could not rule out finding elements of teaching community that could easily fit with professional development schools. Through further investigation, we found factors to which we could attribute the emergence of certain community features, in this case the supervision of a principal. It is with this sort of attention to detail that we combed through our data, searching for repeating features that described and explained the emergence and maintenance of teacher community with our sample sites. What resulted was the following working framework.

The Framework

We propose that schools are composed of structural features that mediate, facilitate, and underlie the development of the diverse range of teaching communities that exist in American public schooling. These structural features help to create individual school cultures and contexts that shape the emergence of teaching community (e.g. Rosenholz, 1989; Little, 1987). Further, the structural characteristics of educational organizations are remarkably stable over time. Stinchombe argues that "organizations which are founded at a particular time must construct their social systems with the social resources available" (Stinchcombe, 1965, 168). As a result, it is important to examine those features of schools that may be considered to be stable "pieces" of the school environment, and how they may impact the nature of teaching communities. But structural conditions are not sufficient to explain all that contributes to a teaching community. We also propose that teachers' commitment to the vision and/or design of a school greatly impacts the nature of collegiality that emerges within a site.

Thus, after preliminary analysis of our data we believe that the following structural features are integral to the development and maintenance of teacher community in our charter and PDS sites: 1) opportunities for staff development; 2) contractual working conditions; 3)

faculty stability and hiring procedures; 4) the community served by the school; 5) formal instructional guidance; and 6) supervision and leadership. In addition to these structural features, we must also consider the commitment of the teaching staff to the school mission and to one another in order to complete a portrait of any teaching community.

What follows is a detailed description of each category in our framework, as well as sketches of how they each bear out in the data. More detailed school portraits for all eight study sites in the study can be found in Appendix A. These initial school portraits begin to explore the different features of teaching communities, as they play out in varied contexts. As we mentioned previously, we purposely allowed a teaching community to emerge from the data before attempting to name or categorize it. Our task, then, was not only to identify a community, but also to begin to hypothesize about its emergence.

Opportunities for Staff Development. In any school environment there are both formal and informal learning opportunities available for all faculty members. In one sense, staff development activities are those that are structured to facilitate professional growth and development, exchange information with other educators, be instructed, or be instructors (i.e. conferences, university classes, in-services). But opportunities for teacher learning can also be those times when faculty converse around issues of teaching and learning on an informal basis. Opportunities for joint work, both those that are designed to be formal learning opportunities, as well as informal verbal exchanges provide a glimpse into how teacher learning is perceived within a particular school. Perceptions of teachers as learners, disseminators, or facilitators all speak to the role of a teacher in a school faculty and the manner in which a teaching community is expected to develop. In asking questions about what activities faculty are participating and who sponsors those activities, as well as what opportunities are made available for faculty to

work together, we can begin to examine how faculty learning and interactions with one another impact the community in which they work (Little, 1987, 1990).

In our study, we found that collegial work, as could be demonstrated through teachers' opportunities to collaborate, and engage in professional development activities, varied widely. For example, in all three of the professional development schools, the teachers have opted to rearrange their contractual working hours so that students are released to give the faculty uninterrupted time to work with one another around issues of teaching and learning. At Southside, this work commonly takes the form of study groups, or collaboration with University faculty, and at Frank Lloyd Wright, the time is often allocated for meetings and in-service type activities. In contrast, most of the charter schools in our sample allocate less "school time" for collaborative activities, delegating joint work between teachers to times when students are at "specials". At Lake Superior Academy (LSA), for example, teachers often collaborate by grade level during the 45 minutes daily that students attend art, music, or physical education. It is important to note however, that the time these teachers spend together looks very different from the joint work of teachers at a PDS such as Southside. Where Southside teachers might engage in discussions surrounding the nature of teaching and learning, and question one another about theories related to a current study at the school, LSA teachers are more apt to be sharing strategies for implementing a lesson plan, trading curricular materials, or comparing activities to make sure that the classes are on a similar track.

While there were marked contrasts between charter and professional development schools in the area of opportunities for joint work and teacher learning, it is important to note that there were differences between charters schools and differences between professional development schools as well. For example, the teachers at Southside and Frank Lloyd Wright commonly use

their reallocated time for joint work, but at Cooper, the teachers predominantly use their freed up time to work individually, or to work in a limited capacity with another teacher. Similarly, while one finds collaboration to be confined to grade level counterparts at LSA, at Central there is greater discussion across grades, in "houses" and "academies". What seems to be most important to note from the data set is that "opportunities" cannot necessarily be equated with substantive work, or learning activities.

Contractual Working Conditions. The "working conditions" at any school speak volumes about the role of faculty both in their own classrooms, and in the organizational unit as a whole. The school work environment, particularly the nature of teacher contracts, establishes what it is like to work in the school, at least from the standpoint of what teachers' structured time, compensation, and commitments to the school might be. Issues as varied as: the length of school day/year, requirements for teachers aside from instructional time, at-will vs. tenure based contracts, salary structures, human instructional support, planning time and class size all contribute to a description of faculty "professional assignments" (Smylie, 1995; Rosenholz, 1989).

In each of our schools, issues surrounding union affiliation, pay scales, and associations with external bureaucracies played an important role in the ways that teaching communities were described. At Marcus Garvey (as well as other charter schools), the principal made special note of the fact that she was glad that she didn't have teachers that could "go crying to the union" (Interview 1). None of the teachers in our study's charter schools are affiliated with a union, nor can they achieve tenure. Thus their contracts are often "at-will". While on one hand, the principals report that this gives them greater control and flexibility in managing their staff, the teachers often report uncertainty over their futures at the school. However, union or lack of union

affiliation does not guarantee the emergence of community. At Central PSA, for example, during it's first year of operations, the teachers were uncertain about what criteria were being used to evaluate their performance, as well as the impact of the performance evaluations might have on their job status (Phillips, Observation 1).

In some cases, bureaucracies associated with a school can facilitate or impede the work of a teaching community. At Southside PDS, the principal often reports that the district doesn't understand the mission of the school, and continues to ignore the PDS work in favor of uniform policies and procedures. Often, in PDSs, teachers must negotiate a multitude of externally devised instructional materials and procedures such as exams, report cards and adopted texts, while at the same time attempting to develop their own research-based conception of "best practice". However, at Central and LSA, the corporate entities that manage the schools, and provide the teachers with curricula and outcomes, free the teachers to potentially work on issues of teaching and learning. In contrast, those schools that were not associated with a bureaucratic structure, found that they lacked the sufficient human resources to meet all of the demands of being a public school and had to contract with management companies for financial and instructional support (i.e., Henry Adams, and Thoreau). One clear finding is that a school's formalized work environment, as characterized through teachers' contractual working conditions, heavily impacts the nature of teaching community that it defines the boundaries within which teachers must operate on a day-to-day basis.

Faculty Stability and Hiring Procedures. The stability of any faculty contributes greatly to the sense of "institutional history" and community. Stinchcombe (1965), in arguing that new organizations have higher failure rates than old ones, describes a "liability of newness". These liabilities are manifested in several distinct ways that hinder a new organization's ability to

provide a beneficial alternative to old structures. There is a need for organizational members to learn new roles. The reward structure of new roles and their relationships to one another cost a great deal in time, concern, conflict and temporary inefficiency. New structures rely on precarious relationships of trust, and the "customers" of new organizations are unfamiliar with how to negotiate the use of a new means of service delivery (Stinchcombe, 1965, 148-9). Describing the stability of a school faculty invites questions related to the number of personnel at the school, as well as issues of teacher retention, attrition and turnover. Further, the construction of a faculty through the hiring and subsequent evaluation process is an equally important part of the story. The democratic (or undemocratic) manner through which faculty are recruited, selected and evaluated can greatly contribute to the sort of stability Stinchcombe advocates (Westheimer, 1998).

With respect to issues of faculty stability and hiring procedures, recent events at Southside PDS make very clear the impact that they can have on teaching community. Once a stable staff of teachers who had been working together for nearly 20 years, in 1998 three teachers left the school and two new positions were created. So five new teachers entered to school. The principal claims that now there is more variability at the school because of the five new teachers. Most of the new staff at Southside were assigned to the school by the district, with the faculty playing a limited role in the selection of new teachers. Thus, members of the faculty are not sure how to proceed. They are questioning whether or not it would be prudent to "retrain" the new teachers to work "the Southside way," as their teaching community has previously dictated, or if that is their responsibility. The principal notes that he is uncomfortable letting the new teachers operate counter to the culture of teaching and learning that has evolved at the school (and other teachers have indicated similar feelings), but at the same time, the teachers are free to work in

whatever fashion they choose as long as it does not contradict district policy. The principal now says that he is "facing some real dilemmas right now," because "the stability of a staff is crucial" to the kind of intensive professional development that has gone on at Southside, and because the teachers need to know and trust one another (Interview 3). Thus the principal and faculty are left with the question of how does one either socialize in or counsel out an unwilling participant in a pre-existing community. Issues similar to those at Southside were echoed at Cooper with a notable difference being that teachers seem to be particularly adept at both recruiting the interns who have trained at their school, and socializing new staff.

In other schools within our sample, issues of stability are addressed simply by the fact that principals have greater control over who they hire. However, control over hiring does not guarantee a cohesive (or committed) community. At Marcus Garvey, there is great instability in the faculty even though the principal has direct control over who works at the school. The principal reports that each year she has had to choose her staff from a relatively shallow pool of applicants, most of whom are inexperienced, and unable to handle the challenges of the community that the school serves. As a result, the staff must primarily deal with issues of management and control of the student body rather that working with their colleagues around substantive topics. It seems clear that staff stability, or lack of, heavily influences the nature of teacher work.

Community Served by a School. The population which a school faculty serves influences the nature of teacher work in a school. This may be especially true in urban settings where children move in and out of a school at an often dizzying pace. Issues of student turbulence and parent support, as well as socio-economic factors and the geographic location of a school all may influence the working environment for a school faculty. For example, studies

have found that when parent support the work of teachers, teacher professional community is strengthened (Newmann, Wehlage, 1995).

At both Thoreau and Henry Adams PSA, there has been (within the time frame of this study) a large turnover in the student body. In both of these cases, these influxes of new students are from lower SES families, and often require both more basic instruction, and socialization to the behavioral expectations of the school. In many ways this has had a more profound impact on the development of a teaching community at the schools than any other factor because the new population of students and families requires the school to reorient their mission to match a new clientele. In each case, although for different reasons, the original mission has had to be recast to fit the families that are actually attending the school. As a result, the nature of what the faculty as a unit is trying to accomplish, and how they may work towards their new goals shifts. In the case of Henry Adams, this shift came in the form of a sizable turnover in staff, and a reorganization of the school administration. At Thoreau, however, the staff remained relatively stable, but the curriculum was changed to reflect the values of the new students' families. This meant different training and development opportunities for teachers (where there were previously none), as well as new involvement for teachers in curricular decision-making.

Formal Instructional Guidance. Who determines what is taught in a school and the manner in which faculty are guided towards a set of teaching and learning objectives speaks to the power and authority that teachers may have both within their own classrooms and throughout the school. One of the dominant characteristics of professional communities is a sense of empowerment over issues as diverse as building policy, instruction and curriculum (Little, 1987; Newmann, 1996). In addition, frequency of use and adherence to externally developed guidance can provide a glimpse into one's commitment to professional standards for best practice.

In our schools we have found examples of both highly prescribed guidance to which teachers are expected to align their practice, as well as the absence of curricular guides, leaving teachers to their own devices to design and implement instructional plans. In all of the schools, attention has been paid to meeting state standards, but beyond that there are few similarities in schools' approaches to instructional guidance. At Cooper PDS, Lake Superior, and Central, the teachers are all provided with well defined instructional guides, with which the teachers comply. However, at Cooper guidance takes the form of district developed performance outcomes, at LSA grade level standards, and at Central a curricular model. In contrast, at Marcus Garvey and Henry Adams, curricular guidance has been primarily dictated by administrative choice in texts. Whether the curriculum is highly prescribed, or loosely defined, how teachers can (and do collaborate) is partially determined by the work (student learning) that they are expected to produce. In an environment such as Central, where the expectation for teachers is to "teach to the model" it seems intuitive that teacher work would be organized around practical strategies for implementation. In contrast, in a school such as Southside where curricular guidelines are seen as just one resource in developing instructional practice, one might expect far more discussion about philosophies of teaching.

Supervision and Leadership. This category attempts to address the issue of "who is in charge" at any given school. For example, does the principal foster autonomy or collegiality? This category is one of the most frequently identified elements considered to be critical to the emergence and healthy functioning of teacher community (see Little, 1987; Westheimer, 1998; Newmann, 1996). In attempting to understand who is both formally and informally authorized to hold schools accountable, we must address implicit issues of power and control. Thus, we look

to the role of the principal, the role of teacher-leaders in the school, as well as to whom faculty must report for clues as to who is in charge.

The faculty in our study all report that they are responsible to a wide variety of people and organizations. Most notable in this arena are districts, corporations, principals, and other teachers. The management and organization of each school differs greatly, ranging from traditional business hierarchies at LSA and Central, to collaborative peer supervision at Southside. In each case, faculty speak of the community in which they work being impacted by the determination of who is formally authorized to hold teachers accountable for their practice. For example, issues of local governance affect *who* makes decisions at each school. At Frank Lloyd Wright the management is nearly entirely site based, giving the principal, as well as the teachers, control over management issues ranging from curriculum to budget. In contrast, at Lake Superior, even though charter law dictates that they are an independent entity, their association with the Essential Traditions Schools network connects them to a larger bureaucratic structure that places a great deal of the administrative decision-making outside of the school.

In our schools we also found that the types of decisions for which faculty report they are responsible, also speak to issues of supervision and leadership. In other words, we are not only concerned with to whom faculty are responsible, but for *what*. As we previously noted, the teachers at FLW are responsible for a wide variety of administrative and curricular decisions, suggesting that faculty are placed in important leadership roles in the school structure. In marked contrast, teachers at Central and LSA are expected to implement decisions made by others outside of the building, indicating that their decision-making power is limited to their work within the classroom.

Faculty Commitment to a Vision/Design. If, "through psychological mechanisms like identification, or through reward systems, an aggregate becomes a group to the degree that damage to the collectivity (or its members) is 'bad,' and the success of the collectivity is 'good,'" (Stinchcombe, 1965. 181) then teaching communities are to a large degree dependent upon the relative commitment of a faculty to the ideals of the organization. These collectivities, which Stinchcombe calls "communities of fate," are deliberately designed to reward individuals within organizations if a common purpose is achieved, and be punitive in the face of failure.

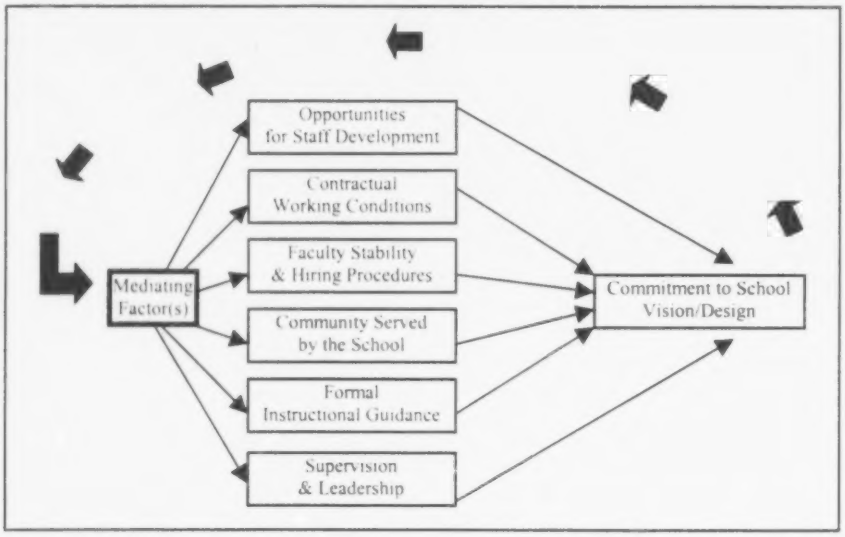
Frank Lloyd Wright and Cooper PDS have created their sense of community around the commitment and dedication of a core group of teachers and the principal. In these schools, the stability of a small group of staff, who are in many ways "prophets in their own land" has kept the outward signs of a unified community together. While FLW and Cooper may differ significantly in the extent to which the entire faculty is committed to the same ideals, the presence of a stable unified "front" characterizes the nature of the community. However, commitment is not confined to the PDSs in our study. At LSA, for example, the faculty are all strongly committed to a back-to-basics curriculum, and strong moral values, as an explicit element of the formal curriculum. The commitment in this school however, is not derived from a core of staff, but from the careful selection of a faculty that would support the mission of the school. In effect, the principal's decisions to hire these teachers was based on his assessment that they would support the school mission, and the school mission is perpetuated through the teachers' commitment to those ideals (for which they were hired).

A Model in Progress: The Relationship Between Conditions and Commitment

The structural features of a school serve to enable or impede a faculty's relative commitment to the school vision or mission. Whether or not a faculty has "bought in" to a

school mission speaks more clearly to the essential nature of a teaching community. We maintain that teaching communities are a function of both the structural features of the school, and the commitment of the faculty. The norms, values, and expectations of a teaching community, the manner in which they are reinforced, in addition to questions regarding how much they are shared by an entire group, all contribute to a robust description of a teaching community. Below is a preliminary attempt to depict the cyclical and interactive nature of the relationship between the conditions of schools and the commitment of faculty that build a teaching community.

Diagram 1: Relationship Between Conditions and Commitment in the Formation of Teaching Community



We believe that both school structures (i.e. conditions leading to community) and commitment (i.e. characteristics of a community) are mutually reinforcing, and both are necessary to the creation, maintenance and survival of teaching communities. In other words, teachers need to be committed to doing the work necessary, but they also need the time and space such work requires. While the above elements of a teaching community may be common to all schools, the manner in which those elements are manifested and interact can be vastly different.

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While we propose that a faculty's commitment to a school mission or design may in fact be able to affect the conditions that exist within a school, it is unclear what may mediate a faculty's ability to influence the structural environment of their school. These mediating factors may help to answer the question of whether teaching community is capable of acting as a reform strategy, or a means through which teachers become agents of reform. Regardless of the shape a teaching community takes, the relative commitment of the faculty to a set of shared ideals and norms is central to its ability to transcend the organizational structures which propose boundaries.

Future Use of the Framework: Topics of Interest

The framework described in this paper provides an opportunity to investigate teaching community as a pluralistic entity. By identifying the essential features of teaching communities it is possible to create portraits of what it means to work in a school in varying contexts. In developing "community profiles" of schools, it is also possible to compare and contrast sites both within and across those identified dimensions of community. The relationships between various school structural features, faculty commitment, and other potentially mediating factors is likely to produce a great deal of variation in what teaching community looks like, as well as how it is understood by those who are a part of it. Furthermore, we believe that in each school, different contextual elements will prove to be more salient in, or pressing on, the nature of teaching community. Our framework allows us to begin parceling out the elements of teaching community that "become" more important in various schooling environments, giving us an opportunity to further explore what constitutes a community.

Through continued research, we believe that it will be possible to develop a "measure" of community that can be longitudinally examined. In developing measures of community, it is

possible to explore lines of research that would benefit both from statistical analysis (with survey data), as well as qualitative description. By developing a measure of community, in addition to a measure of each "feature" we can look at changes in schools, and the resulting impact on levels of faculty commitment. For example, we can examine how changes in school administrators may impact measures of supervision and leadership, as well as the manner in which the community as a whole is affected. Below, we have begun to list some potential research questions for which we believe this framework is most aptly suited.

1. The role of a reform effort in the development and maintenance of a teaching community. The teaching communities found in the charter and professional development schools in this study demonstrate that reform theory does not necessarily predict teacher community. Rather, teaching communities seem to be more closely aligned with the structures of the schools in which they operate. Not surprisingly, Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) note that school context and culture is one variable that is not easily manipulated by policy measures. By testing this against our framework we hope to better understand the ways in which teacher community differs between charter and professional development schools. Furthermore, as our "model in progress" depicts, there is a question as to what may mediate a teaching community's ability to impact the conditions of a school, it is possible that a reform effort (i.e., PDS) may be such a factor.

2. The degree to which teacher community is manifested among the whole faculty or smaller sub-groups of teachers around shared interests. This speaks to what Sykes, Wheeler, Wilcox and Scott (1996) refer to as a criterion of scope, and has interesting implications for the norms and expectations around the formation and work of a teaching community, regardless of the setting. Preliminary we would like to argue that whole school community is most desirable

(Newmann, 1996), but that small sub-groups of teachers with shared interests is a more likely place for collaboration to start (Huberman, 1993). This data provides an opportunity to test this conjecture.

3. The degree to which teachers' years of experience affect the way in which teacher communities evolve and work. This will be a particularly interesting comparison, as the charter schools in our sample are composed of relatively inexperienced teaching staffs, whereas the PDS teachers in our study are veterans of the classroom, averaging between 15-20 years experience each. Because beginning teachers have distinctly different learning needs from their more experienced peers, we are hypothesizing that teacher community is likely to look differently among the two reform strategies. Our hope is that this analysis will reveal a deeper understanding of how the work of teacher community is impacted by the years of experience among its members.

4. The relationship between school structural features and teacher commitment to a vision or design. This final point seems a fitting place to end. One of the most striking features of the data is the almost idiosyncratic and contextually situated ways in which teacher community seemed to form and be sustained across our sites. We believe the key to understanding this phenomenon broadly is through a deeper understanding of how teacher commitment not only is supported by structural conditions, but in some cases transcends organizational barriers. As we've stated previously, a supportive structure is necessary but not sufficient for teaching communities to emerge and grow. Commitment is also necessary. This may actually be more significant to charter and PDS reform than more traditional schools for two reasons. First, the freedom from compliance with bureaucratic restraints allows schools the flexibility needed to

restructure in ways that best guarantee student learning. Second, both reforms, by nature, require school-wide formal commitment to a vision by teachers, administrators and parents.

Closing Remarks

Admittedly there are gaps and holes in our argument and our analysis. What we present here is only a beginning. A fresh look at a relatively new, arguably underconceptualized and sorely unexamined phenomenon: teacher community. Two views on the topic are absent from this particular analysis, yet seem to us of central importance. First, none of this matters much if teacher community doesn't translate into improved student learning. Our assumption throughout has been, and will continue to be focused on what's best for students. Second, efforts to describe and explain professional community as a organizational entity are not sufficient in and of themselves. The work of a teacher community can be either substantive or trivial, it can promote teacher learning or it can maintain the status quo. Perhaps Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) said it best: current restructuring efforts have put too much emphasis on structural elements "while the need to improve the culture, climate and interpersonal relationships in schools has received too little attention" (p. 786). Simply put, a failure to also consider the nature and quality of the work done by teaching communities will not guarantee the sort of benefits attributed to collegial work.

In conclusion, judging the nature of collaborative work is a complicated task, as "teaching community" does not represent a single, unified idea. On one hand teachers become automatic members in a professional community of peers when they sign a contract. But this doesn't necessarily lead to the joint work characterized in the literature as essential to visions of professional community. As Little (1987) claimed more than a decade ago: "A lot of what passes for collegiality does not add up to much. When teachers meet only occasionally on questions of logistics, broad curriculum outlines, or school-level matters, they are unlikely to

engage in close mutual examination of how they think about teaching, plan for teaching, or handle teaching demands in the classroom" (p. 505).

Our attempt in this analysis has been to describe what teacher professional community means to the educators in our sites -- and as a result deepen our own conceptual understanding of teacher learning through community. Looking closely at a data set collected over a three year, we tried to pull together a story line that speaks fairly and responsibly to teaching community as it emerges and is sustained by charter and PDS reform strategies.

Lake Superior Public School Academy

"Shared Commitment": Missionaries in a Familiar Land

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	Teachers can, and do, work with the other teachers at the same grade level while students attend "specials" (45 minutes daily). Training is provided by the management corporation in corporate policies, school procedures, and purchased curriculum packages. Some activities are developed around the "moral focus" and are addressed at staff retreats. Most staff development is provided by the corporation, and is required of all employees.
Working Conditions	• Non-Unionized Staff • At-Will Contract Status • Managed by Essential Traditions Schools • Merit-Pay Bonus System • No Tenure • Average class size – 24 • Student/Faculty Ratio – 15:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Classroom teachers are responsible for all academic subjects. • "Specials" teachers are responsible for P.E., art and music.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	The principal hired nearly all of the original staff, with the input of the core of teachers who were first hired. Applicants for positions at LSA submit their applications to ETS, and the LSA principal can use that pool to chose who he hires. Virtually no teachers have left since the school opened.
Community Served by the School	The school serves a primarily middle-class Caucasian population, from several neighboring school districts. There is virtually no student turnover, and there is a waiting list to get into the school. Parents are required to sign contracts regarding their involvement at the school.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of Use & Adherence to Guidance Provided to Faculty?	LSA makes use of mostly packaged texts and curricula, including Open Court Reading, Chicago Math, and Hirsch's Core Curriculum. Other guidance provided to teachers are highly defined outcomes, lesson plans, and lists of suggested activities. Corporate officials as well as the principal indicate that faculty are expected to implement the highly prescribed curriculum. The faculty in our study stays close to the prescribed curricula, and do not question the guidance.
Supervision and Leadership	LSA is managed by a corporation (ETS), and the principal describes the school as being very well regulated through the Board, Chartering Agent, ISD, State Testing (MEAP) and ETS, but at the same time claims that there is a great deal of professional autonomy in the building. The principal "manages" the staff, and is a virtually unquestioned authority in the building, and ETS is virtually unquestioned as an external authority. Teachers are evaluated through an appraisal process that is facilitated through the ETS office. Parents are seen as agents of accountability as they must choose the school and remain satisfied with the environment.
Commitment to Vision/Design	There is a high level of commitment to the corporation, school, and "values". Administrators, teachers, and parents share equally in a commitment to a morally responsive, back-to-basics, traditional school environment.

Central Public School Academy

"Growing Interdependence": Making the Model Work

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	Staff regularly meets in "house" and "academy" groups during school hours. These groups provide time for joint planning. Staff meetings address procedural information. Franklin Corporation provides consultants and trainers for school in-services. Teachers also travel to curriculum training seminars by Franklin.
Working Conditions	• Non-Unionized Staff • At-Will Contract Status • Managed by the Franklin Corporation • Career Ladder • No Tenure • Average class size – 22 • Student/Faculty Ratio – 18:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Classroom teachers are responsible for all academic subjects. • "Specials" teachers are responsible for P.E., art, foreign language and music.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	The faculty has remained relatively stable, but there have been three administrators over the past three years. The school administrator (principal) is responsible for hiring school faculty.
Community Served by the School	The school serves a primarily African-American student body, drawing mainly from one urban school district. There is a waiting list to attend the school. No data on student turnover.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of use and adherence to external guidance?	Central makes uses of mostly packaged curricula including, Roots and Wings, Chicago Math, Scholastic Science. Teachers are expected to uses these curriculum packages, as well as follow curriculum guidelines and outcomes developed by the Franklin Group. Teachers are expected to "teach to the Franklin model", and the teachers in this study adhere very closely to the curricular materials provided to them.
Supervision and Leadership	Franklin Central controls 70% of the instructional program. The principal functions in the role of "superintendent". Teachers have an opportunity to assume leadership roles within the "academy" and "house" groupings. Faculty report that they are beginning to collaborate on issues of teaching and learning in addition to relying on the Franklin model.
Commitment to Vision/Design	Relatively high commitment and responsibility to Franklin principles on the part of the staff. There is however, some grumbling and dissent regarding school "operations". Administrators and teachers, share a commitment to ideals of academic excellence as evidenced through the longer school day and year, as well as use of technology and "high standards" curriculum.

Thoreau Public School Academy

"Making it Together": Starting Over From (almost) Scratch

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	There do not appear to be many opportunities for staff to work together. There are no regularly scheduled breaks or meeting times for teachers. Teachers do attend curriculum in-services sponsored by the intermediate school district.
Working Conditions	• Non-unionized staff • "For Cause" Contract Status • Managed by the Beverly Group • Merit Pay Bonus System • No Tenure • Average class size – 22 • Student/Faculty Ratio – 16:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Classroom teachers are responsible for all academic subjects, P.E. and art.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	The staff of the school has remained relatively stable. They lost 7 teachers out of 31 (1997-8); some were terminated, others left when grades 9-10 were dropped, and 2 who left voluntarily. They now have a staff of 25. The original founder/principal was removed by the Beverly Group and replaced with the assistant principal. A team of parents, staff, and students does teacher hiring.
Community Served by the School	The student population has changed over the past three years to reflect a different socio-economic stratum (23% of families were on free or reduced lunch, now 43%). This has resulted in new "behavior problems", and less involved parents.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of use and adherence to external guidance?	Teachers used to be largely on their own in devising their curricula, and there was a great deal of unevenness. The Curriculum Council (teachers and board members) chose to use the ISD curriculum at the urging of the new principal. The ISD curriculum must be purchased. Materials include sample lessons, test materials, resources, suggestions for pedagogy, content scope and sequence, learning objectives, and other elements, but not textbooks, for it is not a text-driven curriculum. Faculty are expected to follow the new curriculum or leave the school.
Supervision and Leadership	The first principal/founder was more of an "autocrat", while the second principal claims that he is more approachable and more inclined to delegate decisions to faculty. He claims his role is that of a stabilizing force. The teacher in our study have reported little about their roles as leaders other than participating in mentoring programs for teachers new to the school. While the school is site managed, all faculty are Beverly Group employees.
Commitment to Vision/Design	The school founder had a strong vision for the school when it opened. He hired teachers who he felt were "team players", which didn't necessarily create a sense of faculty commitment to his vision. When the founder was replaced, the original mission of the school became practically defunct. Issues of supply and demand superceded the original mission. The new principal speaks of having to redefine the founder's dream and create a school that serves to bind all elements of the community with faculty and parents. It is unclear how committed the faculty are to this new school design.

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Henry Adams Public School Academy

"Taking it Day by Day": Struggling to Make Adjustments

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	No set schedule for staff meeting or professional development. Teachers are expected to stay one hour past the final bell, and are released for a 30-minute lunch and whenever students are attending "specials". Most of the learning opportunities are one-time workshops that some (but not all) faculty attend on a sporadic basis. Examples of workshops attended by faculty: Discipline for the Classroom, ADHD Teleconference, How to Handle "Differently Abled" Children in the Regular Classroom. Health Curriculum, Being an Effective Elementary School Principal, Conflict Resolution, Handling Confrontations, Phonics, School Readiness.
Working Conditions	• Non-Unionized Staff • "For Cause" Contract Status • Managed by the Beverly Group • Merit Pay Bonus System • No Tenure • Average class size – 25 • Student/Faculty Ratio – 14:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Teachers are responsible for all academic subjects. • "Specials" teachers are responsible for music, art and computer classes.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	There has been a fair amount of staff turnover. Five of 13 teachers were terminated and replaced in 1997 most likely because they were not able to work well with a changing student population. We have little data on the hiring process.
Community Served by the School	High student turnover. The school continues to adjust to the new students they are serving. They have had to fire and hire teachers, change administrators, alter curriculum and materials, introduce a new test, and rethink parental involvement, all in response to the unexpected student population that the school now has, relative to the students the school served when it was a private and church-affiliated. The one consistency in the school community is that is has and continues to be nearly 100% African-American.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of use and adherence to external guidance?	There is no formal, structured guidance beyond the textbooks chosen by the "Superintendent". A new "Dean" has been hired (i.e. assistant principal) who is supposed to be helping with curriculum development. Over the course of the schools existence as a charter, there has been great concern over alignment with state standards and tests, which has driven a number of the curricular choices. Teachers are expected to align their instruction with the Michigan Core Curriculum. The teachers in this study report that they closely follow the texts with which they were provided.
Supervision and Leadership	Two Academies (North and South) which are each led by a principal. The superintendent supervises both Academies. The teachers in this study speak little of their roles as leaders. While the school is site managed, all faculty are Beverly Group employees.
Commitment to Vision/Design	There does not seem to be a commitment to any articulated vision or design, other than service to the community. While the superintendent may have a vision for the role of the school within the community, it is unclear to what extent it is similarly held by the rest of the faculty.

Marcus Garvey Public School Academy

"Behind Closed Doors": How do we manage it all?

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	Professional development activities consist of irregularly scheduled in-services. The principal speaks of needing to do more "professional development" with the staff around the school mission (i.e. afro-centric curriculum). The teachers in this study do not report working together surrounding issues of teaching and learning.
Working Conditions	• Non-Unionized Staff • At Will Contract Status • No Tenure • Average class size – 26 • Student/Faculty Ratio – 13:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Teachers are responsible for all academic and "special" subjects, with the exception of computers.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	The principal reports considerable turnover in 1998-9. New teachers were added in grades K, 1, 2, 4, and 5. The principal has nearly sole control over the hiring process. She has reported difficulty in selecting teachers due to limited pool of applicants.
Community Served by the School	MGPSA serves a primarily African-American community. The majority of students were disenrolled form the same nearby school district. Historically, the schools founders were highly involved with the "Parent Support Network", a group organized for parents dissatisfied with said district. While we have little data on student turnover, there are openings in all grades.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of use and adherence to external guidance?	Teachers use a combination of administration approved texts (e.g., Houghton-Mifflin and Macmillan-McGraw in literacy; Scott Foresman in math) and teacher developed materials. Textbook use is inconsistent among the teachers in this study. The teachers also report little in the way of formal, explicit curriculum guidance.
Supervision and Leadership	The principal is very well known in the African-American Community and for the parents who send their children to the school, she is MGPSA. She is very much the leader of the school, but does not demonstrate strong instructional leadership. She is a leader of the school as a community center, but it is questionable about the kind of educational authority that she wields.
Commitment to Vision/Design	Commitment amongst the staff to the afro-centric curriculum is unclear, and varying Commitment to the school community, and the children served, is greater, though still varied.

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Cooper Professional Development School

"Banding Together": Let's Make This Work for Kids

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	Teachers are expected to participate in both district-wide staff development as well as PDS/Building staff development. Professional activities include: mini-sabbaticals, district-wide curriculum committees, speaking at conferences, presenting papers, leading professional development activities for the district, interning in the math program, training other schools' teachers in the math program, taking courses, and attending leadership conferences.
Working Conditions	• Local Union Affiliation • Step-Scale Salary • Tenure System • Average class size – 25 • Student/Faculty Ratio – 17:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Classroom teachers are responsible for all academic subjects. • "Specials" teachers are responsible for P.E., art, and music. • The teachers have opted to reorganize their planning time, and have a "PDS" afternoon for special activities. • Teachers are provided time during the day to work on curriculum matters, but they are also asked to work beyond contract hours. • "Other" adults (including parent volunteers) are used as support systems.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	A core of teacher-leaders have remained for a number of years (including the principal). New staff are socialized into the school quite readily, or "counseled out". All hiring is done through central district administration.
Community Served by the School	The school serves primarily African-American students. Nearly 80% of the student body receive free/reduced lunch. There is also high student turnover. The principal reports that most of the parents associated with the school are employed, and generally attend school events and support school projects.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of use and adherence to external guidance?	Faculty are provided with detailed district standards which are aligned with state standards. Teachers adhere closely to the district adopted texts and curricula, and do so willingly.
Supervision and Leadership	Strong alignment with district, state, external standards. Staff "look at each other," but do not enforce internally developed standards unless not meeting external standards. The principal "leads by example" and takes the concept of instructional leader quite literally, leading her vision of instruction with the most difficult students.
Commitment to Vision/Design	The university has all but abandoned the schools. There are a few teacher interns, and no current research projects at the school. However, there is a strong sense of empowerment amongst the staff. The faculty is strongly committed to idea that "all students will succeed".

Frank Lloyd Wright Professional Development School

"Cliques": Professional Autonomy and Random Innovation

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	Teachers have the opportunity to work together during "PDS Time" on Monday afternoons, when students are released at lunch time. Teachers participate in the instruction of teacher interns. There are a limited number of teacher research study groups. Teachers attend conferences, and engage in other "academic endeavors" such as publishing and presenting at conferences.
Working Conditions	• Local Union Affiliation • Step-Scale Salary • Tenure System • Average class size – 23 • Student/Faculty Ratio – 17:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Classroom teachers are responsible for all academic subjects. • "Specials" teachers are responsible for P.E., art, and music. • There is negotiated Monday afternoon "PDS time" for teacher planning.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	Largely stable and experienced staff. Most new teachers do not transfer into the building, but are new to the district. All of the hiring for the school is done through district central administration, although the principal has reported some power in being able to "counsel out" or reassign teachers.
Community Served by the School	The neighborhood which the school serves is middle class, white, with a pocket of poverty (there is a housing project located nearby). There is a great deal of student turnover.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of use and adherence to external guidance?	Teachers exercise a great deal of freedom in selecting and developing instructional materials. Literacy instruction (school-wide) is based on a New Zealand whole language model. Attention is paid to alignment with district and state standards/curricula.
Supervision and Leadership	Site based management. The core teachers hold each other accountable for serving children well. The principal does some evaluation, but allows for a great deal of autonomy among staff.
Commitment to Vision/Design	The majority of faculty appears committed to PDS ideals, in spite of flagging university support for the school. The "core clique" is devoted to ideals of progressive instruction. However, there are various "groups" who represent divergent ideals in the school. Those who are aligned with the principal appear to be "privileged".

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Southside Professional Development School

"Well-Oiled Machine": A Working Professional Community

Staff Development Opportunities Group/Joint Planning Time? Formal Learning Opportunities? Who Provides? Who Attends?	Teachers engage in a large number of development activities, both developed internally and by the university. Teachers participate in the instruction of teacher interns. Teachers publish, attend conferences, and engage in other "academic endeavors".
Working Conditions	• Local Union Affiliation • Step-Scale Salary • Tenure System • Average class size – 22 • Student Faculty Ratio – 17:1 (includes all full time faculty) • Classroom teachers are responsible for all academic subjects. • "Specials" teachers are responsible for P.E., art, and music. • The schedule has been modified to an early/early timing (8:06 - 2:35). This schedule combined with a shortened lunch hour and teacher-planning time moved to the end of the day means that a portion of the "PDS" (meeting) time is covered by union contractual hours.
Faculty Stability & Hiring Procedures	Most of the teachers have been together for around 20 years. In 1998, five new teachers were hired. Now there are issues of "retraining" and socializing the staff to the PDS ideals, or Southside culture. All hiring is done through district central administration, although the principal has fought for (and won) greater input into the placement of teachers at Southside.
Community Served by the School	Southside serves a diverse student population because students come from all over Elmwood (through intra-district choice). The student body is 70% minority. Southside is situated in a middle-class, naturally integrated residential neighborhood. The principal reports high student turnover.
Instructional Guidance Texts? Packaged Curriculum? Frequency of use and adherence to external guidance?	Elmwood School District provides Southside with a district-wide suggested curriculum, as well as mandated textbooks. The principal claims that when it comes to curriculum, or instructional guidance, "we don't take things whole". The adopted texts are seen as a resource, rather than a mandate by the teachers in this study.
Supervision and Leadership	The staff and principal at Southside seem to feel a great deal of autonomy both in their governance and their educational decision-making. The principal is both a caretaker and an "instructional leader". Staff "watch each other", and discuss their own practice, but it is unclear how much they enforce their own visions of "best practice". Teachers are leaders, decision-makers, and implementers of their own decisions. Parents "choose" the school, so are in some ways agents of accountability.
Commitment to Vision/Design	Strong commitment to "PDS concept" and the notion that teachers are professionals. The faculty is working to develop vision of "best practice". While the principal does see some waning university support, this school is in all ways the "theory in practice" of PDS.

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